



## Strategies of Clausal Possession

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### ABSTRACT

Across languages, clauses expressing possession, location, and existence exhibit many similarities. To capture their evident affinity, it is often claimed that possessives derive —synchronically or diachronically— from expressions of location/existence. This localist account obscures a basic contrast between two broad classes of possessive constructions, those based on HAVE-type predicates and those based on BE-type predicates. These predicates grammaticize from lexical verbs pertaining to different aspects of embodied experience, resulting in subtle semantic differences reflected in contrasting grammatical constructions for clausal possession. Moreover, both HAVE- and BE-type possessives show interesting cross-linguistic variation which should not be ignored from a typological or a cognitive linguistic perspective. Attention to these structural differences does not preclude a unified account of possessive constructions and their close relationship with locatives. These constructions all manifest our ability to mentally access one entity by invoking another as a conceptual reference point.

**KEYWORDS:** possession, location, existence, localist hypothesis, reference point, grammaticization, subjectification, type vs. instance, virtuality

### I. INTRODUCTION

It has long been observed that possessive expressions are often very similar to expressions of location and existence, which in turn are closely associated. On the one hand, locative

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constructions are commonly used for possession, as in Russian. Equivalent for our purposes is a frequent alternative in which the possessor is marked as an indirect object, e.g. by dative case in Latin.

- (1) (a) *Wo, menja kniga* (at me [is] book) 'I have a book.' [Russian]  
 (b) *Est Johanni liber.* 'John has a book.' [Latin]

On the other hand, possessive constructions are commonly used for location/existence, as in Mandarin:

- (2) (a) *Wo, ˘you, ˘shu, ˘* (I have book) 'I have a book.' [Mandarin]  
 (b) *Zhu, ˘o-shàng you, ˘shu ˘* 'The table has a book [oii it]./' 'There is a book on the table.'

The cross-linguistic prevalence of these associations calls out for explanation. It has generally been explained through some version of the **localist hypothesis**, in which locative expressions are seen as basic, the source from which all the others derive. Lyons (1967: 390), who cited the examples in (1) and (2), formulated the hypothesis as follows: "... In many, and perhaps in all, languages existential and possessive constructions derive (both synchronically and diachronically) from locatives." Anderson (1971: ch. 7) explored this same idea in the context of his localist theory of case. A not dissimilar analysis was proposed by Freeze (1992) from a generative perspective.

Despite the manifest insight of these proposals, a strongly localist account can be challenged on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Empirically, it turns out not to be the case that all possessives descend historically from locatives. Possessive verbs analogous to English *have* and Spanish *tener* (< Latin *tenere* 'hold, keep, grasp') grammaticize instead from lexical sources designating physical occurrences in which the subject manipulates or otherwise acts on an object. The resulting constructions are "conceptually derived from a propositional structure that typically involves an agent, a patient, and some action or activity. In addition to 'take', a number of related action verbs can be employed, such as 'seize', 'grab', 'catch', and the like, but ... verbs like 'hold', 'carry', 'get', 'find', 'obtain', 'acquire', or 'rule' can [also] be used" (Heine, 1997: 91). Such verbs do of course imply that the subject controls (or comes to control) the object's location. Nonetheless, the structures in question are basically agentive rather than locative.

A strongly localist account is also problematic from a theoretical standpoint. Its essential strategy is to ignore the semantic and grammatical differences between various sorts of possessive locutions, as well as between possessives and locative/existential expressions. The unification it thereby achieves is thus accompanied by a number of liabilities. The differences ignored constitute the very basis for contrastive and typological investigation. They are, moreover, quite significant. Research in cognitive linguistics has clearly demonstrated that

differences in form correlate with subtly different ways of construing the same objective situation, and that these represent distinct linguistic meanings even for expressions that are functionally equivalent. To achieve a natural and insightful description, it is therefore necessary to take these differences seriously as the starting point for analysis. Abstracting away from them is not only misguided, in the cognitive linguistic perspective, but entails the considerable theoretical cost of positing such dubious constructs as underlying structures and derivations.

We should therefore seek an alternative way to account for the affinity of possessive and locative/existential expressions. The account proposed is contrastive, for it is grounded in the basic distinction between HAVE- and BE-type possessives and further accommodates their subtypes. The differences in form are explicitly described and related to their slightly divergent meanings as well as their sources of grammaticization. A unified account of locatives and the various kinds of possessives is nevertheless achieved. The basis for their unity is not to be sought in an underlying structure or a common diachronic source, but rather at the conceptual level. In particular, they all manifest the general cognitive ability of invoking one entity as a **reference point** to mentally access another.

## II. THE REFERENCE POINT ANALYSIS

Let us start by briefly considering nominal possessives, as exemplified in (3). "What can we identify as the semantic import of "possession", reflected in the meaning of a possessive marker like 's or the overall possessive construction? (I am concerned here with English prenominal possessives, not periphrastic possessives with *of*. While the two constructions overlap to a large extent, I do not consider *of* to be specifically possessive. Instead its meaning centers on the notion of two entities being intrinsically related to one another (Langacker 1992).)"

From any representative array of data, it is apparent that nothing akin to 'ownership' is viable as a general characterisation (cf. Tooby, 2001). Although certain types of relationship do appear to be prototypical (including ownership, kinship, and whole-part relations), possessives are used for such a wide range of situations that any fully general description—one applicable to all instances—will have to be highly schematic.

- (3) Steve's shirt, your niece, the lion's mane, our friends, my bus, the doctor's busy schedule, their anxiety, the dog's fleas, his complaining, its price, my headache, Zelda's latest novel, his height, your rock, our precarious position, my candidate, the president's vicious statements, her procrastination, the city's destruction

On various grounds, I have argued that possessives are characterised schematically in terms of the reference point ability (Langacker, 1993a, 1995, 2001; see also Taylor, 1996).

If there is anything common to all the examples in (3), as well as countless others, it is that the "possessor" affords mental access to the "possessed". The possessor nominal directs our

attention to a certain entity which thereby functions as a cognitive reference point for interpreting the possessed noun. Of all possible instances of the type specified by this noun, the overall nominal expression designates the one associated with this reference point, hence mentally accessible through it. Observe that this characterisation is a matter of sequenced mental access, not dependent on any particular conceptual content.

For this reason it is clearly abstract enough to accommodate the full range of data. It further accounts for the usual irreversibility of possessor-possessed relationships, as seen in (4). For most pairs of associated entities there is a natural direction of mental access, where one member is readily accessed or identified in relation to the other, rather than conversely.

- (4) \*the mane's lion, \*the busy schedule's doctor, \*the fleas' dog, \*the latest novel's Zelda.  
\*the candidate's me, \*the vacuous statements' president, \*the destruction's city

The essential elements of a reference point relationship are shown in Figure 1. It involves a conceptualizer (C) tracing a mental path (dashed arrow) from **reference point** (R) to **target** (T). The set of targets potentially accessed via a given reference point is referred to as its **dominion** (D). Invoking a given reference point tends to activate its known or potential associations with other entities, which can thereby serve as targets identified (distinguished from other instances of the same type) precisely by virtue of their association with it. As a schematic description of possessive expressions I am thus proposing that the possessor is a reference point, and the possessed a target accessible through it.

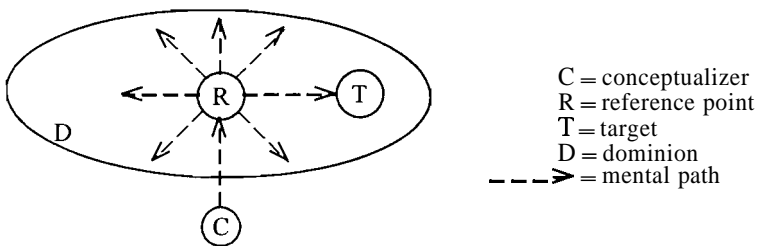


Figure 1

One must distinguish between a **schematic** characterisation, representing what is common to all members of a category, and a description of the category **prototype**, pertaining just to typical members. The schematic description of possession in terms of reference point relations is thus compatible with the designation of more specific relationships as being prototypical. For the latter the obvious candidates are ownership, kinship, and whole-part relations. In addition to being essential, ubiquitous aspects of our everyday experience, each of these inherently provides a salient basis for reference point organisation. Inherent in the very notion of a part, for instance, is reference to its place within a whole. A kin term specifies the relationship a person

bears to a particular reference individual. As for ownership, we are generally more able to identify a possession through reference to its owner than conversely, since we know more people as individuals, independently of their participation in an owner-owned relation.

In prototypical cases, the possessor in some way controls the possessed or has exclusive access to it, whether physically, socially, or experientially. We control the location of objects we own, can use them whenever we like, and determine whether others are allowed to use them. We move certain parts of our body, experience sensations localised in them, and determine their location just by moving around and being where we are.

Individuals linked by kinship participate in the kinds of social and emotive interaction which are proper and often exclusive to that relationship. The same notions of control and exclusive access (often experiential in nature) are prevalent as well in less central cases of possession. Thus *Zelda's latest novel* is one she wrote, *his complaining* is something he does, and *my headache* is one that I (and only I) experience.

Typically, then, possessives are used in cases where **objectively** —as part of the “onstage” situation being described (Langacker, 1985, 1997)— the possessor in some way controls, accesses, or experiences the possessed. With respect to Figure 1, we can say that the arrow from R to T represents a path in which R somehow “reaches” T, whether this involves the transmission of force, making experiential contact, or some other kind of access. The dominion, D, can then be characterised as the set of entities that R is capable of reaching. Collectively they define a region over which R exercises some measure of active control.

Often, though, there is no real sense in which a possessor actively controls, accesses, or experiences the entity possessed. While this is of course a matter of degree, there are countless examples, like those in (5), where the possessor's role is essentially passive (or at least inactive):

- (5) the tree's shadow; my birth date; the dog's enormous size; the applicant's nationality; the table's rough surface; his epitaph; the door's hinges; the painting's poor condition; Kennedy's assassination; our very existence; the car's present location; her complexion; the year's most tragic event; the moon's average surface temperature

For this reason a schematic characterisation of possessives —one valid for all instances— cannot be based on any notion of the possessor controlling (or “reaching”) the possessed. A fully general description has to accommodate the many cases where, within the objective situation being described, the possessor is wholly inactive. What is common to all possessors, across the full range of possessive expressions, is limited to its passive role as conceptual reference point, as shown in Figure 1. Characterised schematically, the possessor serves merely as a reference point evoked by the conceptualizer to mentally access a target.

The possessor does still play a role in “reaching” the possessed. However, it is not the onstage, **objectively construed** possessor who reaches it, but rather the offstage, **subjectively construed** conceptualizer (i.e. the speaker, and secondarily the addressee).

It is important not only to distinguish the possessive prototype from the schema but also to grasp an essential connection between them. The prototype is based on *conceptual archetypes* (fundamental aspects of everyday experience), such as ownership, kinship, and whole-part relations; it thus pertains to the objective situation described. By contrast, the schema is based on the reference point ability (sequenced mental access), and thus inheres in the offstage activity of the conceptualizer —the subject of conception— in apprehending the objective situation onstage. The crucial connection is that the schema is *immanent* in the prototype. The conceptualizer, C, subjectively traces a mental path from R to T as an inherent aspect of conceptualizing the objective situation of R controlling or accessing T. As a possessive construction is extended from prototypical cases to more peripheral ones, the objective basis for this subjective path of access becomes more tenuous. In less typical examples, R is actively engaged in controlling or accessing T to a lesser extent or in a less evident manner, and at the extreme, any notion of R controlling T effectively disappears. A vestige of it does however remain in R's passive role as a point of reference allowing C to mentally access T. As the objective factor of R controlling T fades away, the subjective factor of C invoking R to access T comes to the fore. This is what is common to all possessive expressions.

The relation between the possessive prototype and the possessive schema is an instance of *subjectification* (in the sense of Langacker, 1990a, 1998, 1999a). Subjectification is a diachronic process in which an objectively construed relationship fades away, leaving behind a subjectively construed relationship that was originally immanent in it. In the case at hand, the objectively construed relationship of R controlling T leaves as a vestige the subjectively construed relationship of C using R to mentally access T. Subjectification figures prominently in various kinds of grammaticization. It is of course usual in grammaticization for the source structure to persist in the language long after its descendant has been established and even become predominant.

Possessives thus reflect the common situation of a construction having coexisting semantic variants: a more specific one with substantial objective content; and a more schematic one residing in mental operations immanent in the apprehension of that content.

While I have little specific knowledge about the diachronic evolution of nominal possessives, which tend to be highly grammaticized, the overall scenario is fairly clear in the case of clausal possessives.

### III. SOURCES OF CLAUSAL POSSESSIVES

A reference point relationship is proposed as the schematic basis for both nominal and clausal possessives. The primary difference between them is that a nominal possessive designates the entity possessed (T), employing the possessive relationship to identify it, whereas a clausal possessive designates the relationship itself, thus establishing the existence of such an entity in the possessor's dominion. In the terminology of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1990b,

1991, 1999b), the difference is one of **profiling**, i.e. reference within the conceptualisation evoked. A nominal possessive, e.g. *Sally's iguana*, profiles a **thing**, a particular instance of the specified type (*iguana*), identified via its association with R (*Sally*). On the other hand, a clausal possessive like *Sally has an iguana* profiles the **relationship** that R bears to T. While it may imply some measure of active control on the part of R, the only constant import is that R affords mental access to T.

In the clausal realm, HAVE- and BE-type possessives are distinguished by their choice of subject. HAVE-possessive constructions are characterised by the possessor (R) functioning as subject, the possessed (T) as object. As described in Cognitive Grammar, the subject and object nominals respectively code the **trajector** and **landmark** of the profiled relationship, i.e. the primary and secondary focal participants. By contrast, a BE-possessive chooses T as its subject, with no direct object. The possessor is expressed in some other manner, typically as an indirect object or the object of an adposition (as in (1)). These grammatical differences reflect the diachronic origins of clausal possessive constructions. The two basic types derive from constructions based on distinct conceptual archetypes. Their extension to general possessive use involves grammaticization and subjectification.

As noted previously, HAVE-possessives incorporate predicates whose lexical sources pertain to physical acquisition and control (e.g. 'seize', 'grab', 'hold', 'carry', 'get', 'find').

In such predicates the natural alignment is for the controller and the controllee to respectively function as trajector and landmark (expressed by the subject and object nominals). This alignment is preserved as the predicate and clausal construction are successively extended to wider ranges of circumstances, implying progressively greater **attenuation** in the nature and degree of the subject's control (cf. Langacker, 1999a).

Immanent in the conception of R controlling T is the subjective factor of the conceptualizer scanning from R to T, i.e. mentally accessing them in that sequence. This sequenced mental access by C is all that remains in extreme cases of attenuation, where any notion of active control by R fades away entirely.

Of course, since earlier uses tend to persist as grammaticization proceeds, a highly grammaticized predicate—such as English *have*—generally exhibits a wide spectrum of uses involving different kinds and degrees of subject control. As seen in (6), they range from cases of immediate physical control to cases where the subject functions mainly as a point of reference serving to specify the object's location. R's control of T tends to be experiential in nature, or at least to have an important experiential component. The role of R as an experiencer with respect to T might well be regarded as prototypical for English *have*.

- (6) (a) Be careful—he has a knife.  
 (b) I have quite a few clothes that I seldom wear.  
 (c) Do you have any pets?  
 (d) Everyone should have life insurance.

- (e) She says she has a headache.
- (f) That boy has very long legs.
- (g) We have a lot of mosquitoes here.
- (h) Those states have very few inhabitants.

I thus reject a strongly localist account of HAVE-possessives, where they are claimed to derive historically from locative constructions. This is not to deny that location is a relevant notion. Though not primarily locative in any usual sense, the source predicates generally do imply that the subject controls (or gains control of) the object's location.

Grammaticalized possessive predicates may still imply such control as a specific interpretation or as a secondary component of other relationships (e.g. ownership). Even when R functions merely as a passive reference point, the dominion it anchors can be a spatial region. A localist account of BE-possessives would however seem to be appropriate. We will not concern ourselves with the specific kinds of locative elements which are adapted for possessive use; the source expressions have a range of possible meanings, including 'at', 'from', 'to', and 'with' (Heine, 1997: 5.2). Let us instead consider several other issues: the lexical sources of BE-type predicates; the relationship between location and existence; and how location relates to the schematic characterisation of possessives in terms of reference point organisation.

With respect to the first point, I must limit myself to the observation that BE-type predicates commonly derive from posture verbs. One example is found in Serrano, a Native American language of the Uto-Aztecan family (Hill, 1967, 1969). The verb *qac* transparently derives from Proto Uto-Aztecan \**kat*'sit'. As shown in (7), this verb is used for possession, location, and existence. Clearly it does not ascribe any particular posture to its subject. Grammaticization has rendered it more abstract by "bleaching out" the semantic specifications distinguishing 'sit' from opposing conceptual archetypes such as 'stand' and 'lie'. This is quite analogous to the case of HAVE-type predicates, where grammaticization bleaches out the specifications distinguishing such archetypal notions as 'carry', 'hold', and 'find'.

- |     |     |   |  |                           |                       |
|-----|-----|---|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| (7) | (a) | <i>ni -q'ö, o, r</i><br>my-older:sister | <i>qac</i> .,<br>be                    | 'I have an older sister.' | [Serrano]             |
|     | (b) | <i>payi.-ka'=m</i><br>far:away=they     | <i>qac</i> .,<br>be                    | 'They dwell far away.'    |                       |
|     | (c) | <i>hi.-iñi-'a-c,-</i><br>hunt-AG-ABS    | <i>k'i.-t .-vi,- =</i><br>QUOT=he=PAST | <i>qac</i> .,<br>be       | 'There was a hunter.' |

Examples (7)(b)-(c) illustrate the close relationship between location and existence. They are often hard to distinguish, as witnessed by the near equivalence of the locative *A cat is on the*



table and the existential *There is a cat on the table*. With an indefinite subject, a locative expression effectively calls attention to the existence of its referent in the specified location. Conversely, existential expressions commonly indicate the location where the entity existing can be found. Indeed, it has often been suggested that existence implies existence **in some location**, interpreted either spatially or more abstractly. I believe that we do in fact conceptualise existence in this manner.

Though more is surely involved, a primary difference between locative and existential expressions is that the former indicate a location which is to some extent delimited or identified, whereas the latter leave the implied location wholly unspecified.

The contrast is sketched in Figure 2, where a rectangle depicts the domain of existence (typically space), the ellipse standing for some delimited region within it. A line is included to represent the relationship between the entity being located (given as a circle) and the region it is specified as occupying. While an existential predication does not per se impose any restrictions on that region (e.g. *There are ghosts/Ghosts exist*), nothing prevents us from adding a locative expression to specify a particular location of existence (*There are ghosts in that old mansion*). Nor is it precluded that a locative expression might be quite vague, imposing no significant limitation on the region occupied. At the extreme, the locative element may be wholly non-restrictive, in which case the expression is effectively existential (e.g. *Ghosts are somewhere*).

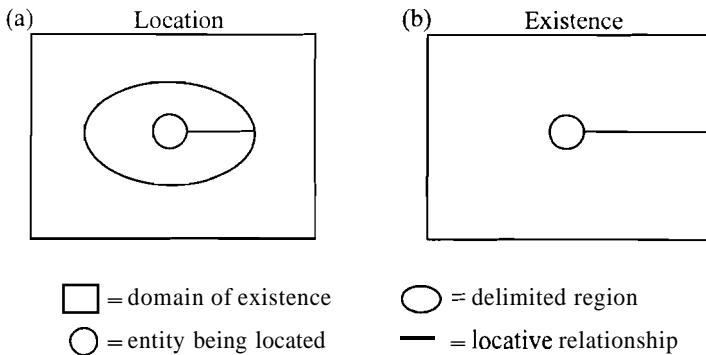


Figure 2

How does a locative expression identify the delimited region where the entity located can be found? Typically it does so by invoking a reference object, some kind of spatial landmark, with respect to which it specifies a domain of search (Hawkins, 1984; Langacker, 1993b, 2002a). For example, the prepositions *above*, *beside*, and *in* have the organisation sketched in Figure 3, where in each case the target of search (T) occupies a search domain (D) defined in relation to the reference object (R). *In* represents the special case where the search domain and reference object are basically coextensive. Diagram (d) is offered as a schematic representation of

locatives. It is not meant to indicate that R is necessarily inside D, but merely that R is invoked as a point of reference to "anchor" the domain of search.

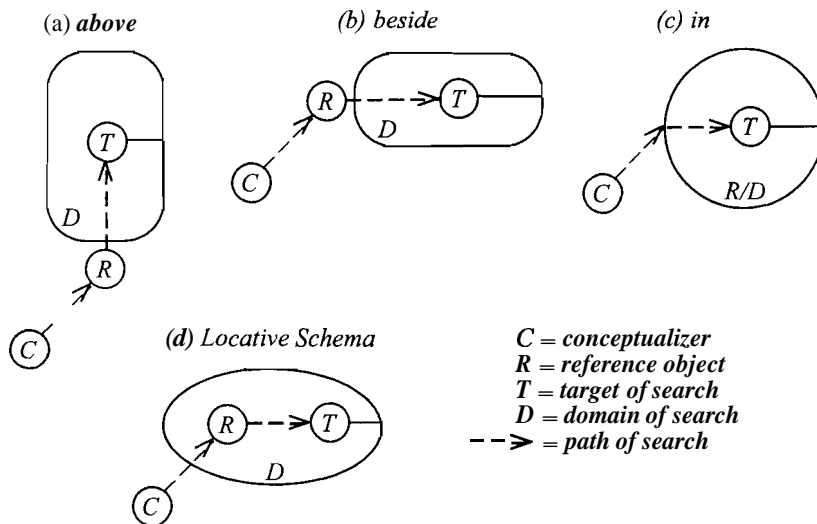


Figure 3

Viewed in this manner, it is evident that locatives are a special case of reference point organisation. A locative expression, such as a prepositional phrase, allows the conceptualizer to "find" the target by "searching" through a limited region in space accessed via the reference object. It is not of course implied that anybody actually moves along the path of search either physically or even visually—the arrows in Figure 3 represent a mental path of access which the conceptualizer follows subjectively in apprehending the target's location. This mental scanning via R to T is however immanent in the conceptualisation of someone actually moving along the path, physically and/or visually, in finding and reaching T.

We thus observe a profound analogy between locatives and possessives in regard to how their schematic characterisations correspond to conceptual archetypes. The schemas are essentially the same, comprising a reference point relationship such that C invokes R, and hence the dominion R anchors, as a way of reaching T. Moreover, this subjectively construed relationship is in each case linked to conceptual archetypes in which it is immanent. These archetypes are however different. For locatives the primary archetype is merely that of something being—more specifically standing, sitting, or lying—in a certain place. Secondly this invokes the notion of its moving to or from this location, and that of someone searching through space in order to find it. The possessive archetypes are the conception of R controlling T, and more specifically the various kinds of control relationships (such as ownership) prototypical for possession.

It is to their common schematic characterisation as reference point relationships that I attribute the special affinity between locatives and possessives. How, then, do they differ? One distinguishing factor is their grounding in different conceptual archetypes. Although locatives are extended to abstract uses, including possession, their center of gravity is clearly the description of spatial location and attendant processes such as moving and finding. And while possessives are extended to myriad uses, including location, their center of gravity resides in such prototypical possessive relationships as ownership and kinship.

They are further distinguished by profiling. The kinds of elements discussed so far are represented in Figure 4, with heavy lines used to indicate the profile. At the schematic level, all of them are based on a reference point relationship. A nominal possessive is so categorised because it profiles a thing, namely the entity possessed (T). The other elements profile relationships, different facets of the reference point configuration. A HAVE-possessive profiles R's relationship of control or access with respect to T, hence R functions as trajector (primary focal participant) and T as landmark (secondary focal participant). In extreme cases, of course, R's control amounts to nothing more than its passive role as a reference point invoked by L. A BE-possessive profiles the relationship of T existing in R's dominion, so T is chosen as trajector. HE-possessives are quite similar to locative expressions, which are often recruited for possessive use. A typical locative element, such as a preposition or prepositional phrase, profiles T's location in D by specifically focusing on its path of access via R. In addition to T being chosen as trajector, therefore, R stands out as a focused landmark.

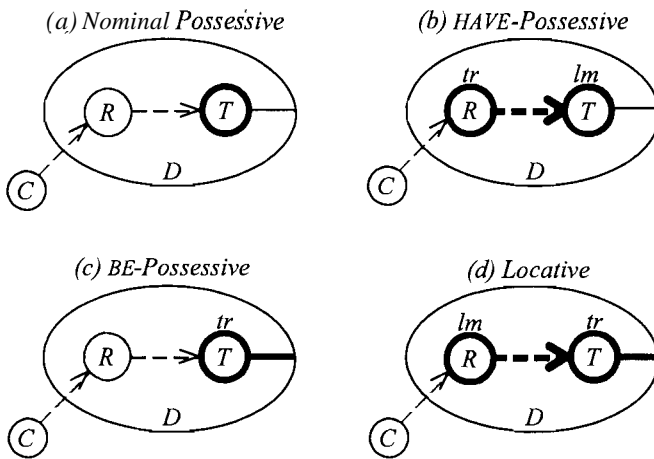


Figure 4

#### IV. DESCRIPTIVE NOTIONS AND NOTATIONS

As a preliminary to characterising alternate strategies of clausal possession, I need to introduce a few descriptive notions from Cognitive Grammar and the notations that will be adopted for them here.

A noun is said to profile a **thing** (defined abstractly), while a verb profiles a **process**, i.e. a relationship viewed in its evolution through time. As seen in previous diagrams, things are represented by circles or other closed curves, and relationships by lines or arrows (evolution through time will not be depicted). In and of itself, a lexical noun or verb merely specifies a **type** of thing or process. A full nominal (i.e. noun phrase) or finite clause, on the other hand, profiles a **grounded instance** of the specified type. Grounding (also omitted from the diagrams) is a grammaticized means of indicating the epistemic status of the profiled entity vis-à-vis the **ground**, i.e. the speech event and its participants (Brisard, 2002; Langacker, 2002b, 2002c). Typical grounding elements include demonstratives and articles, for nominals, and tense for finite clauses.

The conceptual factor distinguishing an instance from a type is that an instance is thought of as occupying a particular (though perhaps unspecified) location in the **domain of instantiation** (Langacker, 1991). If we limit ourselves to physical entities, the domain of instantiation for things is usually space; for processes it is always time. Instantiation will be indicated by means of a small dot, representing the particular location in space or time to which the profiled entity is “anchored”, as shown in Figure 5.

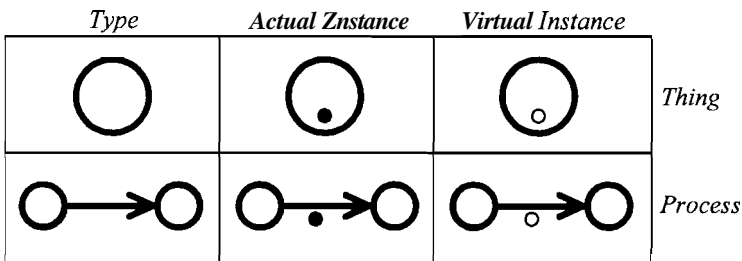


Figure 5

An instance can either be **actual** or **virtual** (Langacker, 1999c, 2002d). It is quite common for nominals and finite clauses to designate virtual entities, often as an indirect means of describing actuality. In (8), for example, all the nominals in boldface profile virtual instances of the specified type (in no case does it make any sense to ask *Which* one?). Here I adopt the notational practice of using a filled dot for an actual instance, and an unfilled dot for a virtual one or one whose actuality has not been established.

- (8) (a) I don't have a **dog**.  
 (b) A **lizard** is a **reptile**.  
 (c) **Every passenger** survived the crash.  
 (d) Three times during the talk, a **gust of wind** blew my papers off the podium  
 (e) **The president** lies to be a **natural-born citizen**.

Consider, then, the structure of a nominal possessive, e.g. *the kitten's ears*. As shown in Figure 6, its three **component structures** are the possessor nominal *the kitten*, the possessive marker 's, and the possessed noun *ears*. These are integrated by means of **correspondences** (dotted lines) between particular elements within their semantic representations. The **composite structure**, depicted at the top, is obtained by superimposing corresponding elements, merging their specifications, and imposing the same profile as the head, in this case *ears* (to simplify the diagrams, constituency will be ignored).

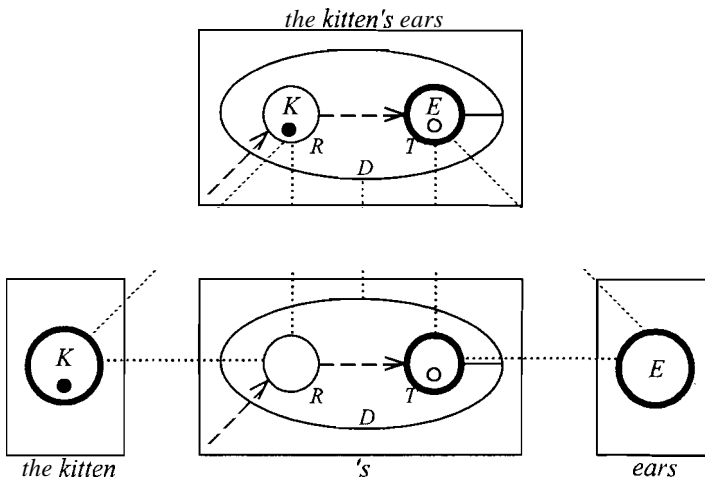


Figure 6

As a nominal, *the kitten* profiles a grounded instance of the thing type *kitten*, whose many semantic specifications are simply abbreviated as K. It is grounded by the definite article (indicating unique identification by the speaker and hearer in the discourse context), and the profiled instance is shown as actual (a default interpretation for definites). The possessive marker invokes a schematic reference point relationship, within which it profiles the target (Taylor, 1996). Although it does not itself indicate any specific type for the target, it does specify a particular location: T is found in R's dominion (where R in turn is specified by the possessor nominal). Because it is conceived as occupying a particular location, T is construed as an instance of some type. The possessed noun *ears* specifies this type (abbreviated E).

Correspondences equate R and T with the respective profiles of the possessor nominal

and the possessed noun. Hence the composite expression designates a grounded instance of the plural thing type *ears*. It is an instance by virtue of being situated in R's dominion. Its grounding is derivative of the grounding of the possessor nominal: *the* specifies the epistemic status of the kitten functioning as R, and T is identified in relation to R as the instance of its type (*ears*) found in R's dominion. Possession is therefore one means of effecting nominal instantiation and grounding.

Observe in Figure 6 that the target is not represented as an actual instance of *ears*, but only a virtual one. Though actuality would certainly be the default, it is not strictly implied by the nominal possessive construction. For example, the ears referred to in (9)(a) are actual, but those in (9)(b) are virtual:

- (9) (a) The kitten's ears are delicate.  
 (b) The kitten's ears are missing.  
 (c) Every kitten's ears are delicate.  
 (d) The kitten's ears would be delicate if it had any.

In the latter case *the kitten's ears* amounts to a **role** description, in the sense of Fauconnier (1985, 1997). The ears referred to are those specified in the idealised cognitive model describing what a kitten is expected to look like. Whether the referent of a possessive nominal is actual or virtual is therefore not determined by the nominal itself, but by the overall context. In (9)(b), of course, the crucial element is the predicate *missing*, which introduces the notion of counterfactual expectation; the corresponding predicate in (9)(a), *delicate*, does nothing to override the default of actuality. The predicate is not however the only thing relevant. Also contributing to the referent's actuality in (9)(a) are such factors as the clausal grounding (present tense without a modal), the absence of negation, and the presumed actuality of the possessor. We see this in (9)(c)-(d), where the delicate ears are once more virtual.

We are now ready to begin our survey of some basic kinds of clausal possessive constructions. In each case, I will be concerned with expressions functionally comparable to *Sharon has a house*, *I have a brother*, or *The kitten has ears*, i.e. simple statements establishing possession with respect to an instance of the specified type. (In each case, X will represent the possessor nominal, and Y the possessed.) I will further assume that the clausal grounding and other relevant factors are such that the target instance turns out to be actual rather than virtual. While languages have rather different ways of achieving this, they result in very similar composite semantic structures.

## V. HAVE-POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Let us start with simple possessive clauses headed by verbs like English *have* or Spanish *tener*. The basic grammatical organisation of such a clause is spelled out in Figure 7.

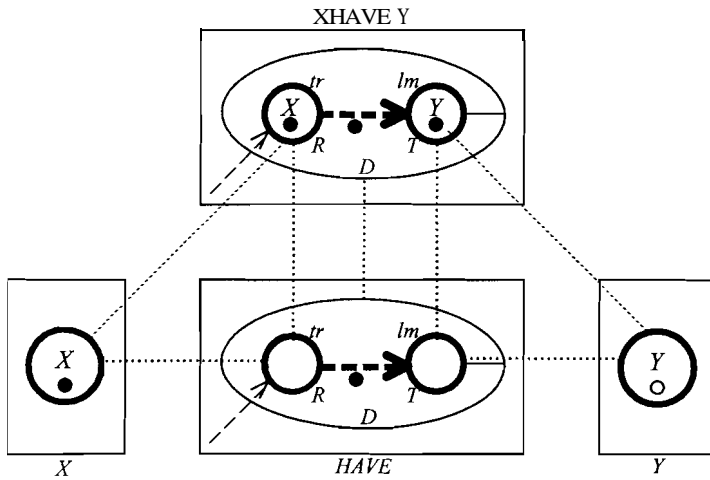


Figure 7

HAVE profiles the relationship of R controlling (or providing mental access to) T. R is thus the trajector, and T the landmark. We are assuming that the profiled process and the clausal subject are grounded and construed as actual. The subject nominal (X) functions in this capacity by virtue of a correspondence between its profile and the processual trajector.

Likewise, the object nominal (Y) functions as such because its profile corresponds to the landmark. As a full nominal, Y profiles a grounded instance of the specified type. It is not however shown as an actual instance. With respect to their internal structure, I suggest that indefinite nominals evoke the profiled instance as a virtual entity, its status vis-à-vis actuality to be determined by contextual factors. Here the relevant factors—most notably the judgement that HAVE itself is actual—imply its actuality. Y is therefore shown as an actual instance at the composite structure level, representing the clause’s global meaning.

In many languages, HAVE is not an independent verb, nor is Y a full nominal. An example is Hopi (Uto-Aztecan), where a noun stem combines with the ending -'yta to form a possessive verb:

- (10) Pam kii- 'yta.                    '(S)he has a house.'                    [Hopi]  
 (s)he house-have

In Cognitive Grammar, it makes no real difference whether -'yta is analyzed as a derivational suffix or the second element of a compound. In either case it profiles the process of X controlling Y and imposes this processual profile on the complex verb and on the clause it heads. The diagrammatic representation of the clause would be the same as Figure 7, except that Y—as a lexical noun—would be shown as just a type and not an instance (the unfilled dot would

be absent). At the composite structure level the instantiation of Y is at least available as an inference: from the actuality of HAVE it follows that this relationship obtains with respect to at least one instance of the specified type.

A more substantial variation on the basic HAVE-possessive pattern is found in Luiseño (also Uto-Aztecan):

- (11) *l. ʷaam=c. ʷa=po l. ʷam-tukmay-i ʷay-ma-an* 'We will have a basket  
 we=we=FUT our-basket-OBJ have-DUR-FUT [Luiseño]

A literal translation of (11) would be something like *We will have our basket*. The distinctive (and initially puzzling) aspect of this pattern is that the clause predicates possession with respect to an object nominal that is itself possessive, presupposing the very same relationship designated by the clause as a whole. How can this be?

The mystery dissipates when we recall that a nominal possessive does not itself establish that the target is actual. The construction is coherent and sensible if we assume that the object nominal is construed as a role description (like *the kitten's ears* in (9)(b)) — 'our basket' is the one we are expected to have given relevant cultural models. The clausal possessive construction then serves to specify its status vis-à-vis actuality: if the HAVE relationship is actual, the basket is as well. In the case of (11), its actuality is predicted for the future.

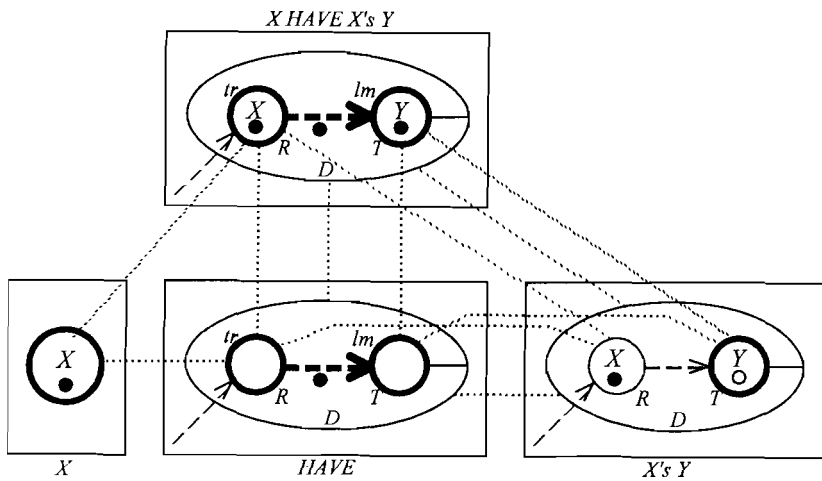


Figure 8

The details are given in Figure 8. HAVE and the object nominal (X's Y) both evoke reference point relationships; they respectively profile the process of R controlling T and the target itself. Correspondence lines indicate that these two reference point relationships are fully identified: the two reference points are equated, as are the two targets and the two dominions.



Despite the redundant specification of R by both the subject nominal and the possessor prefix (not to mention the subject-agreement clitic =*a*), the conposite semantic structure is basically the same as in Figure 7.

We must also consider how a HAVE-possessive can be exploited for locative/existential use, as in Mandarin. Example (2)(a), *Wǒ yǒu shū* 'I have a book', is a standard HAVE-possessive clause of the sort depicted in Figure 7. Apart from the subject, the locative/existential (2)(b) is directly parallel: *Zhō-shàng yǒu shū* 'The table has a book [on it]'/'There is a book on the table'. The essential difference is that the subject in (2)(b) is not an active controller, but merely a passive point of reference. Indeed, since *zhō-shàng* is literally 'table top', what the subject actually profiles is a location, i.e. a delimited spatial region. The sentence therefore profiles a reference point relationship (coded by *yo*) in which a location (*zhō-shàng*) assumes the role of R and is focused as trajector.

Invoking a location as reference point has an important consequence, apparent in Figure 9 from the contrast between diagrams (a) and (b). When a location functions as reference point, it is natural —if not automatic— for this same location to also be invoked as the relevant dominion. The delimited region to which a location affords mental access, in order to find a target, is most readily identified as being that location itself. The result, as shown in 9(b), is that R and D collapse. With a locational trajector, what a HAVE-predicate profiles is effectively just the relationship of R passively hosting T and thereby providing mental access to it.

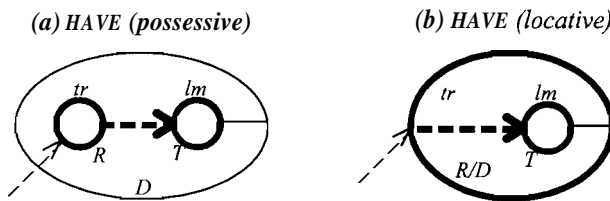


Figure 9

Hence a sentence like (2)(b) has the semantic and grammatical organisation sketched in Figure 10. It is the same as Figure 7 except that X is a location, with the consequence that R and D collapse. X is thus presented as a domain of search where an actual instance of Y can be found.

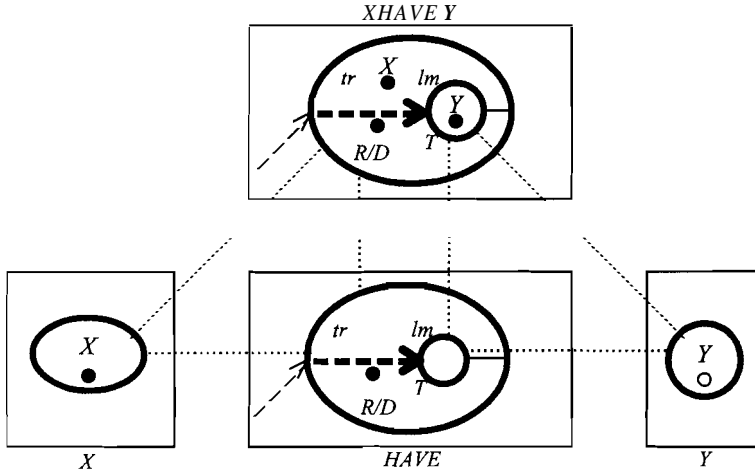


Figure 10

## VI. BE-POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

One kind of BE-possessive construction basically reduces to spatial metaphor, where a locative expression is interpreted abstractly as describing location in the possessor's dominion. If sufficiently grammaticized, BE is just a "copula". What this implies, in a Cognitive Grammar analysis, is that BE is highly schematic, serving only to specify that the profiled relationship (in this case locative) extends through time and is thus processual (Langacker, 1982). Having so little intrinsic content, "copular" BE is sometimes omissible. In Russian, for instance, it is omitted in the present tense, as seen in (1)(a): *U menja kniga* 'I have a book'. It does however appear in other tenses. The examples in (12) illustrate the parallelism between locative/existential and possessive clauses (Freeze, 1992):

- (12) (a) *Na stole byla kniga* (on table was book) 'There was a book on the table.'  
 (b) *U menja byla sestra* (at me was sister) 'I had a sister.'

The basic elements of a locative BE-possessive are sketched in Figure 11. BE itself is not explicitly represented, for even when present it merely extends the locative relationship through time (systematically omitted in the present diagrams). Whether interpreted spatially or metaphorically, the locative preposition provides the essential content of the profiled clausal process. Its landmark (R) is specified by a nominal, X, which thereby functions as the prepositional object. The other nominal, Y, is the clausal subject by virtue of specifying the trajector of the profiled process (i.e. the temporally extended locative relationship). The clause

thus designates the relationship of Y being located in a spatial or abstract dominion accessible via N.

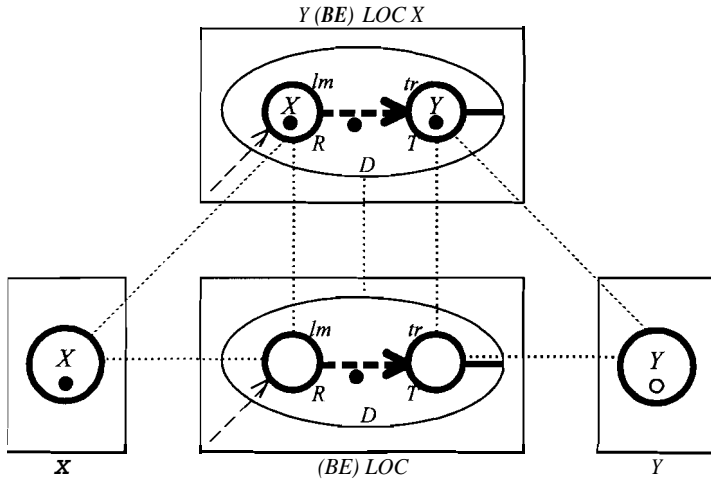


Figure 11

In a second kind of BE-possessive, also employing a locative, BE has existential import. It does not just extend a relationship through time, but indicates in particular that its trajector occurs in some location, albeit one that BE itself leaves wholly unspecified. A possessive results when this schematic location is reified specific by a locative complement which identifies it as the dominion of a reference point. (A "copular" BE may of course represent the further grammaticization of a locative/existential BE.)

For example, possessive clauses in Japanese employ the existential predicate *iruzi* (for animate existence) or else *aru* (inanimate existence). The locative element is the suffix *-ni*, which has a range of spatial senses and also marks indirect objects (cf. (1)(b)). This latter function is quite consistent with its use in possessives, for both indirect objects and possessors tend to be experiencers. We see in (13) that the target of possession, *mago* 'grandchild', is marked as being the subject. This is the expected subject choice for a construction construing possession as existence in R's dominion. (I should note, however, that this Japanese construction is evidently in the process of being reanalysed as a HAVE-possessive. Kumashiro (2000: 4.4.2) shows that while T functions as subject with respect to the predicate *iru*, R does so at the clausal level —The analysis presented should thus be interpreted as applying to the diachronic stage prior to this development.

- (13) *Watashi-ni-wa mago-ga iru.* 'I have a grandchild.' [Japanese]  
 I-I.LOC-T'OP grandchild-SUBJ exist

Expressions like (13) have the structure shown in Figure 12. In this case, clarity dictates that constituency be taken into account. Represented in the lower-left portion of the diagram is the formation of the locative constituent, where X specifies the landmark. Represented at the lower-right is the existential predication, where Y specifies the trajector.

The key to this construction is the higher level of organisation, at which the locative and existential constituents are integrated to form the possessive clause. Essentially, the existence of Y at some unspecified location is fully identified with the abstract locative relationship such that T is situated with respect to X. Effecting their identification are two correspondences: one equating the existential and locative trajectors; and another equating the schematic domain of existence with the locational domain of search.

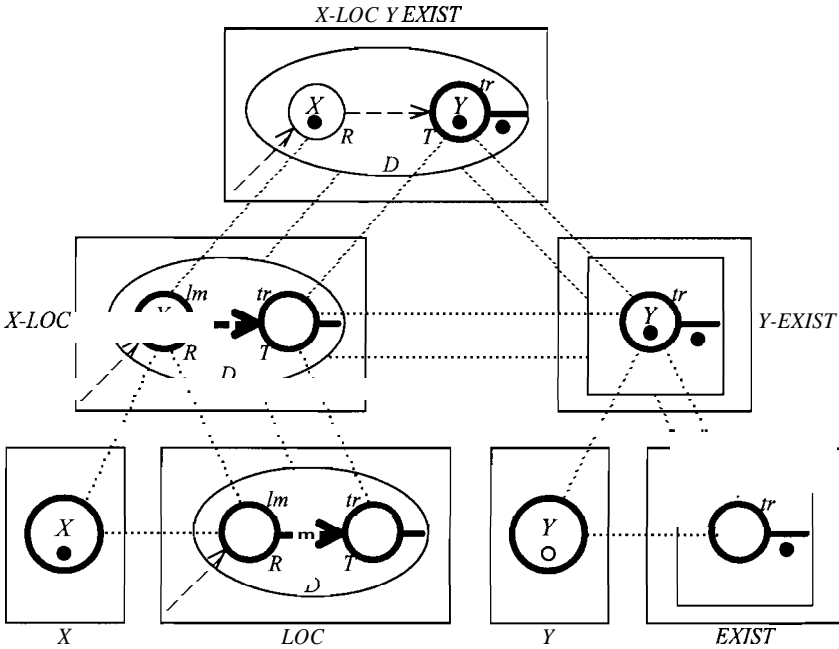


Figure 12

As a final type of BE-possessive, recall example (7)(a), from Serrano: *ni, -q"ö, .ö, r qac, .* 'I have an older sister'. This is an existential construction, literally 'my older sister is/exists'. As shown in Figure 13, it is comparable at the higher level of organisation to the Japanese construction in Figure 12. Here, though, a nominal possessive (rather than a locative) introduces the domain equated with the domain of existence.

Moreover, the higher-level construction is nothing other than the clausal subject

construction, where the nominal X's Y specifies the existential verb's trajector. Still, the composite structures in Figures 12 and 13 turn out to be the same.

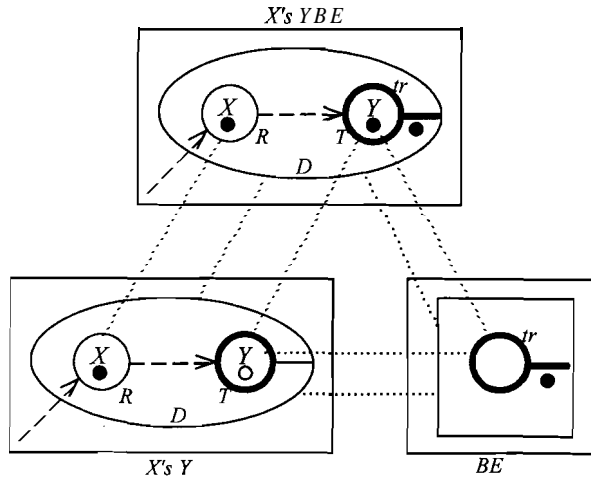


Figure 13

This Serrano construction resembles the Luisño example in (11), diagrammed in Figure 8 (indeed, Luisño has an analogue of this construction). In each case a possessive clause contains a possessive nominal presupposing the very possessive relationship the clause predicates. The key once more is to recognise that the possessive nominal does not itself establish the actuality of its referent. This is determined by higher-level factors, including the status of the profiled clausal process. If the existential relationship profiled by the clause is construed as being actual' so must be its trajector.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Despite their diversity, the clausal possessive structures considered here are functionally quite comparable, alternate ways of saying 'X has a Y'. The proposed analysis accommodates both their diversity and their functional equivalence. Their equivalence is reflected at the composite structure level, where examination of Figures 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13 reveals that the overall content is the same; differences at this level are simply a matter of which elements are rendered prominent by profiling and trajector/landmark alignment. Their diversity resides in how this level is reached, through alternate lexical choices and patterns of grammatical composition. This account thus captures the perceived unity which motivates the localist hypothesis, while respecting the observed variation in clausal possessive constructions and what is known about their diachronic sources.

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